

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 /084 W
-----090188 230900Z /11

R 221134Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0377
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMEMBASSY LONDON
USIA WASHDC
AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMCONSUL MADRAS

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PERP, IN, PK
SUBJECT: INDIAN REACTION TO BHUTTO VERDICT - PART 2

REF: NEW DELHI 4377

1. ON MARCH 20, TWO MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS OPPOSITION IN PARLIAMENT CALLED ON AN UNRESPONSIVE GOI TO URGE THE RULERS OF PAKISTAN TO COMMUTE THE DEATH SENTENCE IMPOSED ON FORMER PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO. THE VOA REPORTED THIS INCIDENT AT 0730 HOURS LOCAL TIME MARCH 22, BUT MISTAKENLY IMPLIED THAT "THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT" HAD CALLED FOR MERCY FOR BHUTTO.

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2. ON MARCH 21, THE SPEAKER OF THE LOK SABHA (LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT) DISALLOWED AN ATTEMPT BY CONGRESS MPS TO DISCUSS THE BHUTTO VERDICT. MEANWHILE, PRIME MINISTER DESAI, ON THE ROAD IN HIS HOME STATE OF GUJARAT, DECLINED AN INVITATION BY THE PRESS TO COMMENT ON THE BHUTTO CASE. "THIS IS AN INTERNAL MATTER OF PAKISTAN AND SINCE INDIA IS COMMITTED TO NON-INTERFERENCE IN OTHER COUNTRIES' AFFAIRS, I WOULD MAKE NO COM-

MENT," THE PRIME MINISTER SAID. MEA OFFICIALS TOLD US THEY HAD PREPARED A SIMILAR STATEMENT FOR DELIVERY IN PARLIAMENT IN THE EVENT THE LOK SABHA SPEAKER HAD ALLOWED DISCUSSION OF THE BHUTTO CASE.

3. GIVEN THE INDIAN TENDENCY TO SEE A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE CAREERS OF FORMER PRIME MINISTERS BHUTTO AND GANDHI, THE PRESS PREDICTABLY ASKED DESAI HOW HE WOULD REACT IF MRS. GANDHI WERE AWARDED THE SAME SENTENCE. HE REPLIED: "I WOULD NOT HANG HER. WHICH ARE THE CRIMES SHE HAD COMMITTED THAT WOULD INVITE SUCH A HARD PUNISHMENT?"

4. BY MARCH 21 ALL THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE DELHI DAILIES HAD COMMENTED ON THE BHUTTO VERDICT IN THE SAME MILD VEIN REPORTED IN REFTEL. APPEALS FOR CLEMENCY FOR BHUTTO FROM FOREIGN LEADERS CONTINUE TO RECEIVE WIDE PRESS COVERAGE. THE "INDIAN EXPRESS" REPORTED MARCH 22, IN A STORY DATELINED LONDON, THAT BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY OWEN HAD EXPRESSED TO VISITING GOP FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISER AGHA SHAHI THE UK'S CONCERN OVER THE FUTURE OF PAKISTAN SHOULD BHUTTO BE EXECUTED. GOHEEN

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 mar 1978
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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